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GUN AVAILABILITY AND USE OF GUNS FOR MURDER AND SUICIDE IN CANADA: A REPLICATION[1]

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Summary.—Following Lester, the rate of accidental death from firearms was associated with the percentage of firearms used in suicides and on homicide victims except for persons aged 55+ yr.

One proxy measure of the availability of firearms in a society might be the rate of accidental death from firearms (Cook, 1982). Lester (2000) found that the rate of accidental death from firearms in Canada from 1970–1995 was positively associated with both the rates for homicide and suicide from firearms and significantly so for rate of accidental death from firearms and rate of homicide from firearms. Later, Lester (2001) reported that the rate of accidental death from firearms in Canada was significantly and positively associated with (1) the percentage of homicide victims killed by firearms for the total population, men, women, and those in five age groups for 1974–1995 but not for those aged 55+ yr. and (2) the percentage of suicides using firearms for the total population, and those in four age groups for 1970–1995 but not for those aged 55+ yr. The present research replicated Lester's (2001) study and added data for the years 1996–1998. The data for the rate of accidental death from firearms for the years 1996–1998 were calculated by the author from Federal Government data (K. Hung, personal communication, March 2002, Research and Statistics Division, Department of Justice, Ottawa; Hung, 2002).

The rate of accidental death from firearms was positively associated with the percentage of homicide victims killed by firearms for the total population, men, women, and those aged 0–11, 12–17, 18–34, 35–54 yr. (rs = .82, .77, .69, .40, .35, .83, and .51, respectively, one-tailed $p < .05$) but not for those aged 55+ yr. ($r = .15$). Also, the rate of accidental death from firearms was positively associated with the percentage of suicides using firearms for the total population and those aged 0–14, 15–34, 35–54 yr. (rs = .72, .47, .74, and .73, respectively, one-tailed $p < .01$) but not for those aged 55+ yr. ($r = .04$).

As Lester noted (2001), the present analysis indicates that the availabil-

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ity of guns in Canada, using the rate of accidental death from firearms as a measure of the availability of firearms, was associated with a higher percentage of homicides and suicides using guns except for those victims over 55 years of age.

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